

Brigitte Bardot Living Between Bed and Bedlam

BY PETER EVANS

● It is now 20 years since Brigitte Bardot arrived on the world cinema scene and was promptly dubbed the sex kitten. Today, almost 38 years old, she is still the most stylishly erotic love goddess in the game. "I cannot play roles," she says. "I can only play me." But is this part of a tantalizing smoke screen to preserve the enriching image of a life lived dangerously between bed and bedlam?

Has she, as one French critic says, sacrificed everything in her private life to sustain the great money-making myth of Bebe? Roger Vadim, husband No. 1 and the man who made her into the most notorious sex star of the 20th century, laments now: "She needs constantly to seduce and scandalize to prove to herself how sophisticated and desirable she is."

House Without Shades

What is the truth about Brigitte Bardot today? What kind of woman exists behind the durable and bedraggled legend? For the first time she abandons her teasing, evasive interview manner to talk about herself with astonishing candor, a fine intelligence, and unconscious poignancy too as she ranges over her childhood, marriages, divorce, love, sex, work, permissiveness, suicide and money.

Evans: You have been divorced three times, attempted suicide a few times—despite your wealth and success you seem to have trouble holding onto happiness. Why is this?

Bardot: It is very hard to be happy in life for anybody. I suppose people with everyday worries—about money, children, bills, promotion—must think it is easy and lovely being a film star. But it isn't so easy, it isn't lovely at all. Everybody can see you, everybody knows what you are doing—when you change lovers, when you have fights, if you have a spot on your nose. Stardom is a house without shades. And if you have no private life it is impossible to be really happy. There is a French proverb: To live happy, live hidden. Where can Brigitte Bardot hide?

Evans: If you knew at the beginning what you know now would you still have wanted stardom?

Bardot: I don't know if I would do it again. But I would have done something in my life. The world would have heard of Brigitte Bardot—a writer, perhaps, a ballet dancer. But there is a price to be paid for anything worthwhile. Maybe in another game I would not have the compensations I have now.

Evans: Are you a very rich lady?

Bardot: I am quite a rich lady. If I stopped now I would have no problems. I have enough money to live well for quite a long time. I am not a very good business lady, unfortunately, despite some reports. If I were a good business

Please Turn to Page 16

Living Between Bed and Bedlam

Continued From First Page

lady I would be much much richer than I am. But I have enough problems and things to think about without thinking about that!

Evans: Is it sometimes a problem being so independent?

Bardot: Gunther (Sachs, the German industrialist and her third husband) was richer than me—and that was no more successful than other marriages and affairs I've had. So it is not such a big problem, I think. Fortunately I do not find money very aphrodisiacal, it doesn't turn me on. I think that money often removes a lot of the humanity from a man. When he can buy anything he wants, when he can buy a girl because she is beautiful, when he can seduce her with jewelry, usually something nice dies in the spirit.

Evans: Even so isn't it difficult sustaining a relationship with a man infinitely poorer than yourself?

Bardot: No, because I can live like people who are not rich. I don't need to show off a lot of things. I adore simplicity. If you visit my country home you will see how simple it is. I feel well in that. There is a contrary in me: I am very rich and very simple. I hate domestic staff under my feet. I need one, only. It was really impossible with Gunther—so many footmen, butlers, maids. It is strange. Superficially, he was the man made to live with me. He was strong and rich and determined. But his life-style was so different from mine, it was finally impossible.

Evans: How many times have you been truly in love?

Bardot: A lot of times. But sometimes maybe it is better to tell myself I am in love and be happy than to think I am not in love and be sad.

Evans: Did you feel loved as a child?

Bardot: I thought my parents loved me, of course. But it was not exactly their style—showing very much their feelings. They are very English in that way. I saw them rarely, very rarely. I had a nurse when I was small and later came a governess. I didn't know a lot of children. My mother wanted me to meet and be friends with only that kind of child she considered socially suitable. I considered that very wrong. I wanted to see what was happening in other families. I wanted to know the children of another class.

Evans: Were you a pretty child?

Bardot: I was very frozen. I wore glasses. I still need glasses but I never wear them now. What is the name when you are not pretty? The contrary. Ugly? I was ugly. I said to myself, 'Well, I am ugly so I must at least be bright and funny and have other things to compensate.' I was very surprised when I came to make films because I never believed I had the physical material for that.

Evans: When you read articles about the shocking Brigitte Bardot . . .

Bardot: That is never now, no?

Evans: Is it?

Bardot: I hope not! But at a certain moment I was the first to be nude on the screen, the first to have the very hot love scenes. If I had been the second I would not be Brigitte Bardot. But now others have overtaken me. It's true. I started it . . . but now it is very ordinary to see the erotic and, well, so much.

Evans: Does acting frighten you at all?

Bardot: Only in that it can reveal so much of me. Sometimes I feel very naked on the screen even when I am

wrapped from head to foot. The only way I know how to act is to give myself to a role and I wonder if that's a good thing.

Evans: It is often said that you were created by Roger Vadim, your first husband. Do you accept this?

Bardot: He did create me, but he was not alone. I was created by a lot of people—and by myself too. And when we parted there was still work to be done, you understand? But without Vadim I would have died—not my body, my career. But my career would also have perished if I had not created something too, don't you think? At that moment of my life Vadim was the man who could get it together. Now, every day, I must feel I'm being created again by my lover, by me.

Evans: Have you abandoned hopes of a happy marriage?

Bardot: No: I shall go on trying until I get there.

Evans: Have you found that marriage changes a relationship very much?

Bardot: I have never lived with anybody for more than three years—married or not. Three years seems to be my limit. But I don't think marriage has changed the basic relationship. For me it has never been a binding-forever-until-death-do-us-part thing. If it is not good, OK, you divorce. I was married three times and I was not married much more than three times—and that was much better sometimes.

Evans: Can men still surprise you?

Bardot: Oh I hope so. It would be horrible if I could no longer be surprised by a man. I would kill myself, I think. I hope men will continue to surprise me until . . . until I stop surprising them! When that happens perhaps we should call a truce.

Evans: Are you as predatory as you're painted?

Bardot: I don't really think so. I have a reputation and reputations are always exaggerated, don't you think? I'm nervous too, you know. When I see a man and think it would be nice to have a love affair with that man—naturally, I get nervous and shy.

Evans: Have you ever failed to get a man?

Bardot: I try to never fail, so I just want people I know I can get. If I saw somebody I felt I couldn't have, even if I liked him a lot, I would stop. I can be very strong in that way.

Evans: Somebody once said that love for a man is only a small part of his life but for a woman it is the whole of her life. Would you agree?

Bardot: For me, yes. Without love I am nothing. I'm finished. I don't want to wake up in the mornings, I don't want to eat, to read. I need love to live.

Evans: Who tends to end your affairs? You?

Bardot: Oh yeah, of course. Always. I think like Napoleon: When in love the only victory is to escape.

Evans: Do you agree with the view that men are growing weaker as women become stronger?

Bardot: Oh yes, it is very sad. But women wanted that, yes? Now they have it and they are unhappy. It makes me angry. It is getting harder all the time to find real men. It is worse among the young. It is like an epidemic. Fortunately I'm immune since boys no longer attract me too much—I look at them only. But for young girls . . . it is tragic, no?



BRIGITTE BARDOT

... three years seems to be her limit.

Evans: Richard Burton once said he feared most dying and being forgotten. Do you share those fears at all?

Bardot: Being forgotten I don't worry about. Everybody is forgotten eventually, the grandest monuments are dust in the end. But dying is horrible. There should be another way to end something as beautiful as life. I don't want to know what is going to happen to me next week, tomorrow, not even tonight. But I do know for certain that I must die some day and the ultimate future is death. And that frightens me a lot.

Evans: But you have tried to kill yourself?

Bardot: Yes, but why? Maybe at that time I thought, well, I have to die sometime so why not now? Why work and suffer and be unhappy? If once you have to die what is all this stuff before? I like sometimes to get things done with. If death has to be done sometime, maybe I thought, why wait?

Evans: Could you attempt it again?

Bardot: I think now it's over, that phase. I did it and it was not a success. And I hate failure.

Evans: Are you a religious person?

Bardot: I had a Catholic education. But it's out now for me.

Evans: What is in for you?

Bardot: I live outside religion. People lean on religion too much: They use God as an alibi: they are wicked and they confess and they feel good again until the next time. Maybe there is a God but where or how I don't know. So when things are going bad for me I don't feel I have the right to ask Him for favors. I would not like to use something or somebody I only half-believe in. But look how badly people treat religion. Look at Belfast. What kind of religion goes on there? Why kill your neighbor because he prays differently, uses different words? Isn't religion supposed to be the highest kind of love? Then where does the blood in the gutters come from? It frightens me. People who are very religious are often so aggressive.

Evans: Living outside any formal religion, do you feel you have achieved any spiritual growth?

Bardot: I'm a better person than I was 10 years ago. I'm sure. I do try to be better and better—without going to India! Without a guru! Besides it's so crowded in India now, yes?

Evans: How would you describe your soul?

Bardot: Like a labyrinth. Dark—no,

light enough for me to find the door to escape, to freedom.

Evans: Are you a jealous person?

Bardot: Very. That's a bad side to my character. So jealous. But I like the man who is living with me to be jealous too.

Evans: Do you like making him jealous?

Bardot: No, no, no.

Evans: Are you very faithful?

Bardot: Yes . . . during those one, two or three years I am very faithful.

Evans: Is that hard for you?

Bardot: Absolutely not. I hate unfaithfulness. It is not a beautiful thing. It is cheap and I hate it. But it is impossible to live always with the same man and for the man always with the same woman. One day, one of them, or both, will be unfaithful. That day it is finished.

Evans: Don't you think that an affair can sometimes revitalize an ailing marriage?

Bardot: Yes I do, sexually. But it is never the same afterwards. And for me it's everything or nothing. I have many lovers, yes. But they have always been successive: Never do I have more than one at a time. That is enough. The moment I want to be unfaithful I'm off. It is another chapter. And if the man is unfaithful why should I stick around?

Evans: It is hard to imagine that a man would want to be unfaithful to you.

Bardot: Well, after three years maybe you will understand!

Evans: You have one son?

Bardot: Nicholas, yes.

Evans: Would you like to have more children?

Bardot: I think I'm not made to be a mother. I don't know why I think this because I adore animals and I adore children too but I'm not adult enough—and I know it's horrible to have to admit that at 37 I'm not adult enough to take care of a child. I need somebody to take care of me! It's such a big responsibility to have a baby. Life is so hard now, we don't know what is going to happen to the world tomorrow or even in the next hour. I'm very sad to have had that baby—well, he is not a baby now, he is 12 years old.

Evans: Even now you are sad?

Bardot: Yes, because what will be his life? People who are making babies and families now are mad. It is such a bad world.

Evans: Do you see your son often?

Bardot: He is with his father (Jacques Charrier) because he is a boy. If he had been a girl I would have taken her. But it is better for him to be with his father. Jacques is very good for him—always making sport, riding, a lot of active things. I don't want him to be confused by seeing me too often . . . I don't want him to have worries like: Where is my family? Where is my home?

Evans: Does it disturb you when you visit him?

Bardot: Not at all—except I am always very surprised.

Evans: Finally, Brigitte, what has been the hardest decision you've made in your life?

Bardot: I'm a Libra and I hate taking any decisions. All decisions are hard for Libras. I try to arrange my life around decisions. Sometimes you can travel faster on the ring roads of life, no?